

TERM OF REFERENCE NO. 1

13 November 1957

I. PROBLEM

To review and clarify the philosophy underlying the common use of the Intelligence Subject Code (ISC).

II. BACKGROUND

a. The growth and expansion of documentation in the field of intelligence during the last ten years has made it imperative that some systematic mechanism be evolved that would control, in a bibliographic sense, the quantities of information returned to Headquarters from field collectors.

b. Traditionally, libraries have used subject classification systems, either decimal or alphabetical in structure, to help direct researchers to the literature on a given subject available in the library. Many classification systems are in use: some, like the Dewey Decimal scheme, are general, and others are highly specialized to conform with the narrow limits of a particular discipline. Each scheme has as its objective to communicate to the user the intrinsic nature of subjects and their relationships through the medium of logically arranged terminology. The catalog which results from the use of a subject classification system serves as a focal point from which the researcher may proceed to pertinent source materials. No catalog has yet been devised which automatically gives a researcher the specific answer to his problem. The catalog, no matter how intricately arranged, is only part of a larger communication system which ultimately requires personal examination of a mass of material.

c. Conventional libraries have found that savings occur when it is possible to achieve cooperative cataloging of books. The reasons are self-evident. If all agree to adopt the same subject classification scheme and cataloging techniques, i.e., if all "speak the same language", then each book receives analytical treatment only once, basic catalog cards are printed only once, and all participants in the cooperative system reap the resultant benefits. The best illustration of such cooperation is the cataloging and card distribution system of the Library of Congress which today serves thousands of libraries in the U.S. and abroad.

d. There is every reason to believe that the cooperative treatment of intelligence documents will prove equally beneficial to the LAC agencies. Efforts in this direction on the part of AHD have already resulted in savings of time and conservation of manpower.

III. HISTORY OF THE ISC

a. The character of the intelligence document and of its content is unlike that found in other types of literature. Information reported from the field is often fragmentary, documents vary widely in format and

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make-up, and the volume of intake is staggering - some 30,000 IAC documents per month.

b. During the early days of CIA a survey was made of existing classification systems used in the intelligence community, such as the Army's Basic Intelligence Directive (BID) and the Navy Monograph Index Guide, and an effort was made toward achieving a uniform system. Since the climate at that time was not favorable for the conclusion of such an agreement, CIA employed Norman Ball, then with R & D, War Department, as a consultant to develop the basic outline of the ISC, oriented towards the Agency's predominantly scientific and economic interests. Army, Navy, and Air sections were included in the basic outline but were deliberately limited to allow for future expansion by the services if they should so desire. Because three separate Registers had been set up in CIA to handle biographic, industrial, and graphic information respectively, these categories were given no special coverage in the ISC. In 1948, CIA began using the basic structure to index all raw information reports and, shortly thereafter, undertook total coverage of finished intelligence. From 1948 until the present, the ISC has been expanded and revised to reflect both subject and area needs of researchers. It has, however, been necessary to modify the detailed requests of specialists for subject expansion to conform with the principle of practical and easily understandable classification. The ISC was established and has been recognized throughout its 9 years of use as an overall guide and not as a classification system for specialized subjects.

c. CIA is the only Agency thus far that has used the ISC extensively for the coding and retrieval of inter-agency intelligence documents. Consequently, it has developed the only pattern of experience in applying the ISC, and the only body of evidence concerning customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with this method of retrieving information from a general library system. After 9 years, CIA is convinced that ISC application, although important, is only one phase of a total information cycle involving a reference service and its customers. Other phases which are equally vital toward the achievement of the overall efficiency in a general library system include: document storage and access, programming of requests, and the qualities of aggressiveness and knowledgeability among the reference librarians who are in direct contact with the customer. The history of ISC use in CIA points up the fact that this Agency's library system, unlike its specialized Registers, does not automatically consolidate information. The CIA Library, like any of its conventional counterparts, is incapable of immediately providing the answer to a customer's question but can supply him with a body of citations which he himself must examine and accept or reject. A recent study has indicated that the number of citations presented to the customer for review is not necessarily a function of the precision of code construction but can be refined by permitting the reference librarians, in collaboration with the customer, to make the first selective reduction of citations.

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IV. HISTORY OF IAC ACTIVITIES RE THE ISC

a. The Air Force was the first agency to show a marked interest in adopting the Intelligence Subject Code, because a workable classification system was necessary for the Minicard project. From 1953 to date, Air Force document analysts have been trained by CIA in the use of the ISC. In 1955 AHIP discussed a common classification code. This was sparked by the recommendation of the Clark Task Force on Intelligence Activities that "all departments within the Defense Establishment and Department of State adopt a single indexing system based on the ISC." Soon thereafter, A-2, G-2, ONI, and NSA endorsed the ISC for adoption and use by the intelligence community, and the 3 military services established working groups for the revision of pertinent sections of the ISC.

b. In late 1955 the Air Force completed its revision of the 400 Section, which was adopted by both CIA and AFCIN 1 in 1956. The Army Working Group submitted to CIA an ACSI Subject Code draft, containing detailed revisions and expansions of the entire ISC with emphasis on the military, scientific, and technical sections. Navy prepared a first draft of a revised 300 Section of the ISC. The ISC is used at present by many lower echelons in the military services and has been adapted to their unique needs. Beyond the IAC itself, SHAPE Headquarters in Paris adopted the ISC for its document library (1956), [REDACTED]

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V. HOW EACH AGENCY IS USING OR PLANS TO USE THE ISC

a. AIR

AFCIN 1b2 has been using the ISC to index Air documents for Minicard retrieval since 1956. Because of Minicard commitments, Air Force could not use an ISC which extended beyond the 6th digit concept. BAIR requirements have been numbered according to the ISC, and attache reports already carry a general BAIR number. Air Force plans to disseminate the ISC coded documents by means of an automatic disseminator which is being built with a 6-digit capacity.

b. ARMY

Negotiations are underway with RCA to investigate data processing equipment. A revised ISC incorporating Army subject interests will be presented to RCA. Army will probably continue its current manually operated intelligence library, using the dictionary index system now in effect, until the RCA project is completed. Future action by ACSI in adapting the ISC to operational use will depend upon Army acceptance of RCA recommendations. Current concepts based on ACSI-RCA

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research to date are that ACSI would attempt to establish uniformity in research files with collations set up according to the ISC. Furthermore, the ISC would be used for library indexing purposes, and dissemination, also, would be based on the ISC. This code would, therefore, be used for collection, production, and dissemination.

c. NAVY

Navy has no immediate plans for mechanization. However, the revised ISC will be adopted for manual use in the ONI Intelligence Files.

d. NSA

Since NSA is a major recipient of IAC documents, the ISC would be used in reference activities involving retrieval of information from IAC sources.

e. CIA

CIA has been using the ISC for almost 10 years. The Intellifax IBM system, a six-digit subject index, will continue until such time as Muncard has been fully tested and proved superior. There is a possibility of coordinating the CIA reading requirements for dissemination of documents with the subject and area scheme of the ISC.

f. USIA

The ISC is currently used as a pattern in USIA's manual Intelligence Files.

g. STATE

State Department has never been an active participant in any discussions of a uniform classification system because it maintains no intelligence document library as such. State Department's Record Codification Manual follows the ISC to a limited degree in treating scientific subjects.

VI. PRINCIPLES OF COMMON USE

The Working Group is agreed that the following principles should apply to the common use of the ISC within the intelligence community:

a. The ISC shall be simple and practical in both terminology and structure. For application, it should not require expert conversance in each of the fields covered.

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b. The ISC shall be designed primarily to support the subject classification of intelligence literature used by the IAC community. It cannot be considered a panacea for all indexing problems.

c. The ISC shall conform, insofar as possible, with the definition and control of intelligence collection, with dissemination to users according to reading requirements, and, lastly, with the organization of collation files of individual researchers.

d. The ISC shall be sufficiently comprehensive and detailed in subject scope, within 6 digits, to permit classification of the documents of any member agency to meet the general retrieval needs of the rest of the community without reindexing by the user agency.

e. The ISC shall be rendered applicable for use in either manual or machine systems. Some agencies find it necessary to continue with a manual approach, however, it is recognized that the present arrangement of subject codes has influenced the design of Minicard and that the 6-digit notation cannot be expanded for the present without conflicting with Minicard commitments.

f. The ISC may need to be subdivided by specialists within each IAC agency for more precise subject classification of the literature in their respective fields. The Working Group is aware of the need for systematic classification by specialists, but considers it impractical to attempt to coordinate expansions on an inter-agency basis beyond the basic 6-digit structure.

g. The ISC shall include a plan for orderly revision and expansion under coordinated CIA control.

VII. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Working Group, after studying the history, purpose, and plans surrounding the application of the Intelligence Subject Code, reaffirms the position that it is desirable and worthwhile to adopt a uniform subject classification scheme for use within the IAC.

The Intelligence Subject Code is a hierarchical classification which can be applied to either manual or machine systems. Granted that machines can be built by engineers to almost any specifications, the Working Group recognizes that in order to use these machines efficiently for information retrieval there must first exist an adequate classification and coding scheme. The Group is convinced that the Intelligence Subject Code, which has been in use in CIA for the past 10 years, is the most seasoned intelligence subject classification scheme and, with modification, is worthy of universal adoption within the IAC.

Arguments supporting the use of a common subject classification scheme to serve general library and indexing needs are as follows:

1. A uniform subject classification scheme is practical and appropriate because the IAC agencies would then be "speaking the same language" in indexing intelligence documents. This would, in time, improve inter-agency communication.
2. A common scheme would lend itself to other non-library applications, such as intelligence collection and dissemination, and the organization of analyst collation files.
3. It is less costly to the intelligence community to produce, operate, and maintain a single subject classification scheme than to adopt several independent codes. A unified system offers potential for compatibility benefits, such as the exchange of index cards and microfilm, etc., provided that the agencies involved ultimately employ the same processing and machine system.

The Working Group is aware that specialized operations within the several IAC agencies may require adaptations of the ISC to suit particular purposes. The Group considers it impractical at this time, however, to attempt inter-agency coordination of the ISC beyond the 6th digit of the basic structure.

The Working Group also recognizes the likelihood that new classification techniques, such as storage and retrieval of clear text, may be developed, and supports their development and eventual integration into the basic code structure.

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